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Iceland attaches high hopes to the Global Marine Assessment (GMA). This process has the potential to contribute in a major way to sustainable development, providing the international community with the means to monitor and assess the state of the marine environment in a regular and orderly fashion.

In Iceland's view, the main objective of the GMA should be to improve our knowledge on trends in marine pollution and physical degradation in the marine environment and provide clear guidance to governments on priority issues to mitigate these impacts. In that light, Iceland regards the GMA as a suitable forum for implementing article 200 of UNCLOS.

The report, contained in document A/AC.271/WP.1, forms a good basis for an exchange of views among governments at the international workshop. At the same time, Iceland is concerned, among other things, about the unfocused way an assessment of the state of living marine resources has been included in the report.

The decision to establish the regular process was built on the widely shared acknowledgement that the marine environment is particularly vulnerable to physical degradation and pollution. Iceland welcomed the early focus in GMA discussions on marine pollution and continues to regard that issue as a GMA priority.

Iceland recognizes the growing interest in applying the ecosystem approach to an assessment of the state of the marine environment. This would require the GMA to embrace all dimensions of marine ecosystems, including the physical and chemical environment, biota and socioeconomic aspects.

At the global level, such efforts regarding the living marine resources are already being addressed by the FAO, building as appropriate on the contribution of relevant regional and national actors. A separate and duplicating effort within the framework of GMA could deflect attention and much needed resources from such priority challenges as the physical degradation and pollution of the marine environment. Thus, Iceland sees little or no "value added" in including the state of marine living resources in the scope of the GMA.

Furthermore, the GMA reports should be subject to a review by governments. This is an important component of the quality assurance. Arrangements should be made for taking full account of government comments prior to the completion of the report.

Paragraph 46 refers to the reporting of GMA to governments through the United Nations General Assembly "on its activities". It is not clear, however, how the output of GMA will be presented to governments. Paragraph 38 on budgetary considerations refers to the need to invest in "adequate coordination, synthesis, review, and dialogue with policy makers". We suggest that this be done through the UNGA and the informal consultative process. The main conclusions and policy recommendations should be presented to governments and approved by consensus.

Similarly, the informal consultative process should be drawn on in an advisory capacity for the GMA in preparing each regular assessment.

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